How the over-usage of smartphones affects the communication skills of RI Sec 1 teenage students with their friends?

Smartphones are extremely useful at times, since they have multiple and diverse functions that helps to aid someone’s life. These include a PDA (Personalized Digital Assistant). (Phone Scoop, 2011) Although, the smartphones may have some services such as IM and e-mail that help people to chat over long distances, this leads to a loss of actual face-to-face communication between friends, and thus results in the deterioration of communication skills over time.

When smartphones are used for a long period of time, the people using them tend to concentrate on the smartphone itself instead of paying any attention to their surroundings. This may cause a lack of communication with others. This lack of social skills is mainly due to total focus on the smartphone, which is ‘addictive’ since it has many functions. Games on smartphones are usually more interesting, and one can also surf the Internet. This all leads to a breakdown in communication between friends, since the teenage users do not have conversations with friends for a limited amount of time. Also, when spending too much time on the smartphones, they will be too focused on it and instead give short limited answers when answering others and do not bother to communicate properly. Thus, there would be limited or no communication at all with friends.

Thus, I believe that it is necessary to inspect how the usage of smartphones can affect the social relationships of users. I will be focusing on teenagers as my main target. Currently 28.7 percent of teen cellphone users carry smartphones, and analysts expect that more than 50 percent will have one next year. (Luna, 2011) It is highly relevant today since we want to understand the relationship of periods of smartphone usage have on social relationships, and if usage negatively affects social skills, how may we lessen this impact?

1. Framing your Research Topic

a) Some social problems related to the usage of smartphones for teenagers

a. Over usage of smartphones lead to a lot of time spent, thus greatly decreasing time spent on actual face-to-face communication with others

b. Users concentrate and focus more on using the smartphone, and do not want to have a conversation with others

c. Some of the users use chat services and e-mail instead of communicating directly, as they find it more efficient and easy

d. After a long period of usage on smartphones, some users might not be comfortable with having an actual conversation with others, due to their lack of communication in the past

b) Some solutions to decreasing impact of social problems

a. Friends should ask the user to decrease usage of smartphones for not work-related stuff, and instead talk to them more.

b. Convince the users that if there is an over usage of smartphones, they would have less friends and people to communicate with them.

c. Force the children to pay for the smartphone plans instead, and for the applications or music that they download from the software company.

c) Evaluating the solutions

a. It is quite practical, but since my research target is a teenager, they tend to be rebellious. The applications and games also tends to fit and adapt to the youth behavior, and to them, the smartphone is an extension of their social life.

b. This is a bit hard to implement since there are so many teenagers using smartphones, and most likely users will have many friends, since they can play games with each other when using Wi-Fi, and connect with each other about the different games that the software companies are providing.

c. This is a good idea, but parents themselves might not agree to it since teenagers do not make their own money yet, and can’t afford to pay for it. Smartphone plans are also extremely expensive. Buying a typical phone would be out of the question, as this research will then no longer need to be carried out.

d) Propose a promising solutions and how it can be implemented

a. The very first solution would be the best and most practical since it is not as forceful like the third one and more likely to succeed compared to the first one. By having an actual conversation with the user, it is likely to divert the focus from the user using the smartphone, and can instead talk to his friends instead of spending that much attention on using the phone functions, and instead develop communication with friends.

2. Reasons for Choice of Topic

a) Why have I chosen this topic?

a. I chose this topic because I find it very relevant globally, even in Singapore’s Raffles Institution. This is because teenagers have become more tech-savvy, and use more advanced and expensive technology such as Smartphones. However, because of spending too much time and focus on the usage of smartphones, and thus have neglected even the very basic step of social communication with friends, which is to talk to one another. Many of my friends no longer talk, and spend the time between lessons and during recess on their iPhones and BlackBerrys, and thus neglecting others.

b) How does this help me to meet the requirements of the task?

It helps me so as it is an interesting and relevant topic nowadays, and also the results of this research might give smartphone users on hot the over-usage of smartphones might negatively affect their social life. If the results do get known, it may help smartphone users to lessen the impact of the usage of smartphones on their actual social life, that does not include using the smartphone to communicate.

c) This piece of research will help the smartphone users to develop social skills and increase their skill of communication with others by achieving a balanced time of using the smartphone and socializing with others face-to-face, and thus will help to maintain healthy social relationships with friends and family without the need of abandoning the smartphone.

3. Feasibility of the Project

a) This is not really beneficial to the whole country as a society, but more for teenagers who spend a lot of time on smartphones listing to music, and playing many of those addictive games.

b) I think that it would be easy to carry out, as it is easy to find many classmates and friends that use smartphones to a great extent, especially when there is any free time for them to use it. I can find a lot of information on the Internet, and not only that, my classmates will provide me with honest and reliable answers, so that my project findings are accurate.

c) I would say that it is quite reasonable since, most of the smartphone users in my class also have very good friends that they can communicate with easily. Although they are teenagers and may be a bit rebellious, after persistent advice and convincing, family members and friends should be able to get them to talk more openly. Once the usage of the smartphone has decreased, the addiction will also decrease and real-life social relationships will benefit instead.

d) This project will generate a brainstorm of ideas in RI especially since the main focus is always how an object affects our academic studies and not our social relationships. With this project, more people will realize about the effects of the smartphone and not only on whether it affects our grade. This also can facilitate the discussion of how smartphone usage affects our social life. Some smartphone users might also reconsider their actions before over-usage of the smartphone.

4. Manageability of the Project

a) The project would be handled by everyone in the group. We will divide up the task equally among the five of us. In the case of written documents such as GPP or other reports, one person could be in charge of searching for information or research while two people could be tasked with writing out the document while another two edit it. We should be able to discuss our ideas at school, or by simply talking to each other over the phone. This would make it more convenient and we can give opinions more efficiently this way.

b) This project would definitely give enough opportunity for group work since one person definitely can’t do this himself within the time limit. Not only that, conducting surveys and interviews would require the effort of more than one person. By doing this project, it will facilitate teamwork and co-operation since all of us will be trying our very best so as to do well for RE.

c) There are many constraints, such as time constraints. Since this is a group effort, there is bound to be discussions and arguments over ideas and opinions, such as choosing the Preliminary Idea. Having different opinions is inevitable since there are five of us in one group. However, teamwork would be the key to the two constraints mentioned above. In the case of time constraints, if we put our whole-hearted effort into the project, I am extremely sure we would able to complete it within the time limit. When we have different opinions, we can ask the group members to share the reason for thinking why something is the best, and then we could reconsider.

5. Accessibility of the information required

a) Although there may not be an abundance of books or research papers on this topic- how the usage of smartphones will affect social relationships of teenagers, there are many newspaper articles. To ensure that I will get reliable and accurate information, I feel that surveys and interviews would be the most helpful, since I can get a well-rounded perspective by surveying multiple people.

b) Most of the information that I get would be from primary sources. Not only is this accurate and reliable, I also have more access to it. The Internet offers me much secondary sources of information. However, since my target is a teenage smartphone user, I can find a lot of them in my school. They would be much easier to interview.

c) I anticipate problems such as my interviewees being reluctant to disclose information if they actually have a lack of communication with family members due to focusing entirely on their smartphones. They might also not give truthful answers since they might just want to hurriedly finish the survey or interview.